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New York

President:	Mr. Llorentty Soliz	(Bolivia (Plurinational State of))
Members:	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Amendola
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skau
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mrs. Carrión

Agenda

Maintenance of international peace and security

Comprehensive approach to mine action and explosive hazard threat mitigation

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): It is my sad duty to announce the passing on 8 June of Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockman, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. Miguel d'Escoto was a man of God who fought for peace in his country and region, including through our Organization.

I now invite Council members to rise to observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of Mr. D'Escoto Brockman.

The members of the Security Council observed a minute of silence.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of international peace and security

Comprehensive approach to mine action and explosive hazard threat mitigation

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Alexander Zuev, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations; and Ms. Nathalie Ochoa Niño, of the United Nations Mine Action Service in Colombia.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Zuev.

Mr. Zuev (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council deploys peace operations in increasingly complex and asymmetric environments. The threats posed by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices aggravate humanitarian crises and hamper emergency responses. Explosive hazards injure and kill civilians, peacekeepers and humanitarian workers, and their presence undermines the prospects for long-term sustainable peace.

(*spoke in English*)

Echoing the words of the Secretary-General, peace without mine action is incomplete peace. Mine action achieves results in the most difficult operating environments. As an integrated component of peacekeeping and special political missions, mine action is critical to the safety, security and mobility of mission personnel and to effective and efficient mandate implementation. It is also of critical importance to the protection of civilian populations, especially children and women. I will present only a few impressive examples of how this challenge is addressed by United Nations peacekeepers.

In Mali, training for peacekeepers enhances their capacity to mitigate the threat posed by improvised explosive devices and saves their lives. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, clearing explosive remnants of war and other explosive hazards enables safe movement for conflict-affected communities. In South Sudan, the use of explosives detection dogs ensures that protection-of-civilian sites are free from explosive hazards. In Iraq, vast risk education campaigns and humanitarian clearance of improvised explosive devices allow for the safe return of displaced populations and the delivery of humanitarian assistance. In Colombia, mine action was one of the first items parties negotiating peace agreed and acted upon.

(*spoke in French*)

Today's debate reminds us that it is important to take account of mine action in the formulation of mandates and in renewing them. The Secretary-General's vision for the reform of the peace and security architecture is structured around a continuum from prevention to conflict resolution and from to peacebuilding and sustainable development, with strong partnerships playing a central role. Through partnerships with States, regional agreements such as the one we have with the African Union, and with civil society, mine action is able to demonstrate its operational effectiveness and its capacity for implementation through a wide range of the Organization's priorities.

With regard to conflict prevention, the depollution and destruction of anti-personnel mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices make it impossible to access explosive materials that could be recycled and used to construct new improvised explosive devices. Reintegrating demobilized soldiers and employing individuals from affected communities in the area of mine action play a role in creating conditions conducive to peace.

(*spoke in Russian*)

As we have observed in peace processes, such as in Colombia, mine action is an effective tool that allows for the rapid and early strengthening of confidence and peace in very complex and politically sensitive environments. The strong leadership and coordination role of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) supports and promotes those achievements, as has been recognized by Member States. The role of UNMAS in the field in coordinating the work of the mine-action sector, including in complex operational environments such as in Iraq, provides a coherent, focused response, increased efficiency and cost-effective delivery.

The doctrine developed by UNMAS, through broad and comprehensive negotiations includes guidelines for reducing the threat posed to peacekeepers by the use of improvised explosive devices, which provides direction for a consistent response within the affected mission, and also includes international mine action standards used by all operators to provide safe and effective operations on a global scale.

(*spoke in English*)

In response to the call by the Secretary-General in his report on countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices (A/71/187), UNMAS is also using its expertise to coordinate the development of standards for the United Nations on the disposal of improvised explosive devices. The standards, expected to be completed by the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, will ensure conformity in training, equipment and operations. UNMAS is also taking steps to identify the building blocks for a whole-of-United Nations response to improvised explosive device threat mitigation. That has been a key area of concern, especially for troop-contributing countries.

The Security Council expects to be kept informed about threats and efforts to mitigate the threats posed by explosive hazards. I wish to assure the Council of the strong commitment of UNMAS to support the Secretary-General and the work of the Council in advancing the peace and security agenda in general.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Zuev for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Ochoa Niño.

Ms. Ochoa Niño (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful, Mr. President, for the invitation to address the Security Council. It is an almost indescribable experience to have the honour to be here before members to make this statement.

I have been working in mine action in Colombia for the past seven years, first with a civil-society group and now as an official of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS). UNMAS in Colombia plays the critical role of technical adviser to the national mine action authority, at a moment when the negotiation, design and implementation of the Final Peace Agreement between the Government of Colombia and Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército Popular (FARC-EP) necessitates a functional, efficient, and effective Mine Action sector. Since 2002, the national authority — the Directorate for Integrated Action against Mines — has been leading the development of the mine action sector and the introduction of civilian humanitarian demining in Colombia.

I have seen first-hand the enormous impact and consequences that landmine and explosive remnants of war contamination have had on the lives of my fellow Colombians and on the development of my country. For that reason, it has been incredibly gratifying for me to be working with UNMAS to support the process of removing the threat posed by landmines and explosive remnants of war. Seven years ago, the mine action sector in Colombia was at an early stage of development and facing the daunting task of tackling an enormous problem. Allow me to mention a few facts from that time.

Colombia ranked second worldwide in the number of victims caused by landmines and explosive remnants of war. In more recent years, Colombia has recorded fewer victims, but remains in the top five. Seven years ago, more than 50 per cent of Colombia's 32 departments recorded contamination — predominantly then, as now, in the most remote and underdeveloped rural areas. In those places, landmines serve to deny access to services, restrict mobility and prevent the use of productive land, thereby leaving little hope to them recover from poverty. Moreover, the south of the country is home to indigenous communities, who in the past were trapped and cut off due to the presence of landmines, which meant they could not walk in or out of their territory; the humanitarian aid they needed was completely blocked.

My initial assignment took me to one of the most affected districts in my country at the time. I trained the first 50 of Colombia's civilian deminers. We set up groups under my supervision that were made up of victims of the conflict, former military personnel and ex-combatants. I saw them all working together with a common goal, that is, to clear landmines and explosive remnants and thereby help communities: a genuine example of reconciliation.

Day by day, I learned that humanitarian mine action was, in so many areas of my country, key to initiating the socioeconomic reconstruction of communities. That has never been more clear than in the context of a peace process, as we in Colombia have seen.

In 2014, after many years of negotiations, the peace process was at a difficult stage and confidence levels between the Government and the FARC were at a low point. Many even feared that the process might collapse altogether. Given the circumstances, the FARC-EP agreed to participate in the Gestures of Peace process. Humanitarian demining, along with, for example, the release of child soldiers, was chosen as one of those Gestures. In that particular context, the additional benefit of the humanitarian demining initiative was that it enabled the Government and the FARC-EP to demonstrate their commitment to peace and to pursuing coexistence and reconciliation. As a result, the Colombian army and the FARC-EP began to work in cooperation, a significant milestone on the path to peace.

For more than a year, the humanitarian demining activities under the Gestures of Peace initiative constituted the sole concrete action jointly implemented by the negotiating parties. As a member of UNMAS, I had the good fortune to be invited to participate in the initiative. I was able to observe that, despite starting from a point of mistrust, along the road both the FARC representatives and the army were able to define shared terms and goals and establish coordination mechanisms to enable them to deal jointly with the challenges that arose. Ultimately, humanitarian demining as a Gesture of Peace succeeded in making mine action a key issue in the eventual Final Peace Agreement.

Anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war remain an enduring legacy of any conflict, whether or not a peace agreement has been signed. Their presence continues to have socioeconomic consequences for the people affected and is an obstacle to the large-scale delivery of humanitarian assistance and development in many areas of a country. Dealing with the problem means not just eliminating the physical threat in the soil but also setting up structures and processes that can help individuals and communities recover from the impact of mines.

In the case of Colombia, various provisions of the Peace Agreement took specific steps and defined the roles that mine action could play in that context. First, it recognizes humanitarian demining as a precondition for implementing other public policies, including those related to replacing illicit crops and the collective return of internally displaced persons. It is also fundamental to development plans. Secondly, former combatants' participation in the humanitarian-demining process can be explicitly accepted as a form of punishment within the transitional justice framework outlined in the Agreement. Thirdly, their participation is considered to be an act of reparation for the damage caused by the conflict and as a way to help to reverse its effects. Lastly, mine action is seen as a way to provide former combatants with options for economic and social reintegration and employment opportunities. It also represents a unique opportunity for the United Nations to maintain its support for affected communities, such as those in Colombia, in particular because mine-action initiatives help to promote efforts to achieve sustainable peace. This is a process that UNMAS has had an opportunity to initiate. Various kinds of demining action, for example, might contribute to disarmament activities being carried out under the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Colombia.

UNMAS is supporting the relevant national authority in its development of national demining plans and in prioritizing the country's worst-affected areas. In addition, as a guarantor of international standards, UNMAS has been working on the adoption of national standards that will enable Colombia to improve the efficiency of its operations and will ensure a faster response in the communities where it is needed. We have recently had the privilege of starting to train former combatants, which will lead to the creation of a civilian humanitarian demining organization that will enable Colombia to achieve its goal of reintegrating 20 per cent of demobilized combatants.

There is a monumental challenge ahead for Colombia — the consolidation of peace in the wake of the signing of the Peace Agreement. Humanitarian mine action will be a crucial activity in helping to put a

definitive end to the violence and establish a foundation for peacebuilding and development activities for all Colombians. The Security Council has a vital role to play in ensuring that demining can contribute in other areas to improving the lives of communities affected by mines and that it can result in the benefits that are so evident in my country. I am proud to be here and working for UNMAS, as an agent for change and for strengthening mine action in Colombia. I hope that the Council will continue to ensure that Colombians can count on its support in dealing with the challenges that they face. I am grateful for the enormous opportunity to address the Council today.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Ochoa Niño for her testimony and the information she has given us.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Bolivia thanks Mr. Alexander Zuev, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Operations, for his briefing, and Ms. Nathalie Ochoa Niño for her briefing and for the work she is doing. We are also grateful to Mr. Vincenzo Amendola, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy, and we would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and commend Italy and its leadership for their mine action efforts.

> "I was walking normally and I stood on a rock that began to wobble. Just as I was about to jump off it so as not to fall over, the mine that was there exploded. It hurled me a distance of about 20 metres and I hit a post as I fell. I fell into that hole, looked down and realized that I had lost a leg and that the other one was hanging by a single tendon. At that moment I felt no pain. I now feel as if that pain will never go away."

That is the testimony of a 12-year-old boy who was blown up by a landmine on 7 August 2010.

> "Suddenly something exploded. I felt nothing, but I fell to the ground and saw that my brother had too. There was dust everywhere. I could not walk, and I saw that my right foot was bleeding. It has now been amputated because of a landmine. Like everyone else, I was told later that this was a residential neighbourhood that had been abandoned because it was contaminated with landmines."

That is the testimony of a 27-year-old university student named Raed.

Civilians are the chief victims of contamination by explosive hazards, particularly in post-conflict situations. Landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) continue to take the lives of thousands of people and to leave many others mutilated and disabled. Contamination by such weapons continues to have severe humanitarian consequences in many countries throughout the world. For example, according to data from the Monitor organization, the number of victims of landmines and explosive remnants of war went from 9,220 in 1999 to 3,678 in 2014, that is, from an average of almost 25 victims per day, or more than a victim an hour, to 10 a day in 2014.

Despite that decrease, however, the number of victims remains extremely high. The most concerning issue relating to these more than 3,600 victims of landmines and explosive remnants of war is that 79 per cent of them are civilians. I repeat, 79 per cent are civilian victims, innocent people who have nothing to do with the conflict, and 39 per cent of those are children, boys and girls; again, 39 per cent are children.

In 2014, in Somalia 81 per cent of the victims of mines were children, and in South Sudan the number stood at 60 per cent. It is clear that the use of such weapons is far from having been eliminated. In addition, from 1999 to 2014, more than 1,600 humanitarian deminers were killed or injured, 53 of them in 2014.

The number of victims is extremely worrying, and so is the proliferation of such explosives. In 2014, there were victims in 54 countries around the world: 18 in sub-Saharan Africa, two in the Americas, 11 in the East and South Asia and the Pacific, two in Europe and Central Asia, and 11 in North Africa and the Middle East. Likewise, in 2014 there were 57 countries with areas contaminated by landmines and explosive remnants of war: 12 in sub-Saharan Africa, 6 in the Americas, 12 in East and South Asia and the Pacific, 14 in Europe and Central Asia, and 13 in North Africa and the Middle East.

Although it is very difficult to calculate exactly the extent of the contamination, in 2014 alone more than 200 square kilometres were cleared of mines and explosive remnants of war.

Another consequence of this phenomenon is the contamination of entire areas in which the civilian population used to live and carry out their daily activities. As a result, many populations find their access to basic services such as water and land restricted. Land becomes unusable and access to it, and its use for agriculture, becomes impossible, including after conflicts have ended, slowing peace processes and paralysing development efforts. For this reason, people often have no other option than to flee their homes for long periods of time and to live in very precarious circumstances as a direct result of the threat posed by such explosives, swelling the number of internally displaced persons and refugees and further complicating their return once the conflict has ended. The harm and destruction caused to civilian infrastructure such as water-delivery and sanitation systems increases the risk of the spread of disease.

Although the civilian population is the chief victim of landmines, explosive remnants of war and IEDs, humanitarian staff, both of the United Nations and of other organizations, and peacekeepers are also victims of these devices. In 2015 alone, we recorded 38 direct attacks using IEDs against civilian humanitarian staff and United Nations peacekeepers. This means that such personnel are not only exposed to this threat but also prevented from being deployed effectively so that they can discharge their mandate.

Mine action does not, therefore, have just a humanitarian aspect; it is also crucial for the forging of a lasting and sustainable peace. It is not possible to achieve effective piece without including mine action in the mandates that require it. It is on the basis of this understanding that we wish to underscore the work of and the role played by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in the coordination of demining efforts in the 18 peacekeeping operations and special political missions in which it is operating. The work it carries out in terms of mine clearance, education and victim assistance is key for the building of lasting and sustainable peace processes. Here I would reiterate that in any conflict in which landmines were used and explosive remnants of war remain, it will not be possible to achieve a sustainable and lasting peace without mine action.

Bolivia is a pacifist State that does not manufacture, stockpile or use landmines. We have signed and ratified the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We call upon all States that have not yet signed these Conventions to accede to them, and we appeal to all States parties to the Treaty fulfil their commitments thereunder.

It is against this backdrop that two weeks ago Bolivia submitted a draft resolution that is currently being negotiated. We would like to thank all delegations for their positive input to the draft, and we hope to continue to work towards an eventual adoption thereof in the coming days. Bolivia firmly believes that this draft resolution, once adopted, will set a very positive precedent recognizing the threat posed by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices, as well as the importance of mine action for peacekeeping and for international peace and security.

I would like to conclude my statement by quoting the preamble to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, popularly known as the Ottawa Convention. A total of 162 States are party to it; it is one of the cornerstones of mine action around the world and of future treaties in the same area. The preamble states:

> "The States Parties,
>
> "Determined to put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by anti-personnel mines, that kill or maim hundreds of people every week, mostly innocent and defenceless civilians and especially children, obstruct economic development and reconstruction, inhibit the repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons, and have other severe consequences for years after emplacement" (*General Assembly resolution 52/38*).

This is one of the responsibilities of the Security Council.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Amendola (Italy): At the outset, let me thank Bolivia for bringing this important topic to the attention of the Council. We look forward to the discussion on the draft resolution, which will provide a possible outcome for our debate. As has been mentioned, the indiscriminate harm caused to civilians as well as to peace and security by anti-personnel mines

and explosive remnants of war remains a matter of great concern.

In this regard, I would like to thank Mr. Alexander Zuev and Ms. Ochoa Niño for their reports, which give us a complete and comprehensive overview of the situation. Indeed, while mine action has been crucial in helping communities recover from conflicts or receive humanitarian assistance during conflicts, ongoing events are generating new areas of contamination that may deny civilians access to their basic requirements. In that respect, let me recall that countries affected by mines are mostly middle- and low-income countries. Most of the victims are innocent civilians and often children, which is our primary concern.

We are looking at the expanding range of the threats to civilian populations. I am referring, for instance, to the increasing use of new devices, such as improvised explosive devices, particular by non-State armed groups, as well as to the risks posed by unsecured weapons and ammunition stockpiles located in populated areas. As Mr. Zuev mentioned in reference to Iraq, and as I personally saw with the Carabinieri, there are certain implications of fighting those new devices in order to rid the country of threats. Similarly, we are seriously concerned about the recent indication that the number of people killed or injured by mines and other explosive remnants has been on the rise. Unfortunately, that trend has been accompanied by signs of decreasing funding devoted to mine action.

Against that background, we shall remain vigilant, even within and through this Council. In that regard, we commend the United Nations Mine Action Service and the other United Nations entities involved in mine action for their remarkable and professional work in an increasingly complex environment. Their work is also open to the involvement of civil society, which, of course, is creating cooperation between our entities and the civil mobilization through that process. We value the coordinating efforts deployed by UNMAS and the progress made on the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018. Italy will continue to support such efforts through our current chairmanship of the Mine Action Support Group.

We will maintain our commitment to mine action with regard to each of its five pillars — demining and clearance, risk education, victim assistance, stockpile destruction and advocacy, inter alia, against the use of antipersonnel mines and cluster munitions. As party to all the legally binding instruments relevant to mine action, including the Oslo Convention, the Ottawa Convention, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, Italy strongly encourages all States to join them. Those instruments set high standards for mine action and they will universally mark clear progress.

To conclude, I would like to add my voice in acknowledging that mine action is an essential step for an effective humanitarian response, a precondition for the safe return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their homes and a prerequisite for reconstruction and development, including for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For the reasons I just listed, we stand ready to do our part.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I wish to express my appreciation for the Bolivian Presidency for organizing today's debate on mitigating the threats posed by landmines and other explosive hazards.

As it has been more than a decade since the Security Council pronounced itself on the issue, we welcome the discussion, as well as the draft resolution put forth by Bolivia on a comprehensive approach to mine action. It is indeed fitting that today's meeting is taking place at a time when the twentiethth anniversary of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), the leading United Nations entity that coordinates and implements all aspects linked to the mitigation of the threats arising from mines and explosive remnants of war, is being celebrated. We thank Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Alexander Zuev, and Ms. Natalie Ochoa Niño for their respective briefings.

International humanitarian law puts limits on parties to an armed conflict when their means and methods of warfare that could cause unnecessary suffering. Only acts that are proportional to the lawful objective of a military operation and necessary to achieve that objective are allowed. International humanitarian law also requires parties to an armed conflict to take necessary precautions when using landmines. That is aimed at minimizing their indiscriminate effects in armed conflicts. As such, parties must record their placement of landmines as well as they possibly can, as well as remove or otherwise render them harmless to civilians or facilitate their removal of the end of active hostilities.

That notwithstanding, the continued use of anti-personnel mines and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), as well as the number of civilian casualties from the use of such weapons with indiscriminate impacts and explosive remnants of war, are indeed sources of concern. As a country that has suffered from the impact of landmines and other explosive devices for several decades, Ethiopia attaches great importance to mitigating the impact of landmines accordingly. Ethiopia has ratified the relevant international legal instruments and has been actively engaged in mine action and clearance.

The need for a comprehensive and coordinated approach aimed at addressing the threat and impact of mines and unexploded ordnance has long been recognized by the Security Council, since its presidential statement S/PRST/2003/22, adopted in 2003, which could help integrate stockpile destruction, mine clearance, victim assistance, awareness creation, as well as the need to work towards the eventual elimination of anti-personnel landmines. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction certainly provides an important international framework for addressing the problem of landmines. In addition, we believe that the resolution just adopted sends a strong signal regarding the need to mitigate the threats posed by landmines and other explosive hazards and promote peacebuilding and stabilization. It will also reinforce the implementation of existing to international legal instruments and enhance cooperation between and among Member States, including through the sharing of knowledge and experience in mine action.

Peacekeepers continue to play a critical role in mine action, particularly in demining-related activities. As a major troop-contributing country, the use of IEDs in recent years against peacekeepers by armed groups in asymmetrical warfare is a source of great concern to us. Strengthening the responding capacities of peacekeepers to the threat posed by mines, IEDs and explosive remnants of war would require the Security Council to renew its commitment to mine action and enhance the capacity of peacekeepers to address the threats arising from mines, IEDs and explosive remnants of war through the provision of adequate and sustained support, including when authorizing the deployment of missions and renewing their mandates.

In conclusion, I would like to end my statement by affirming our commitment to work towards a comprehensive approach that could enable us to prevent or limit the damage and suffering caused by mines, IEDs and explosive remnants of war.

Mrs. Carrión (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay thanks the Bolivian Presidency for having organized today's informative meeting, as well as for circulating the concept note and putting forth today's draft resolution. Due to today's meeting being on a topic of particular importance for the maintenance of international peace and security, it requires our attention. We would also like to thank the Assistant Secretary-General for the Rule of Law and Security Institutions of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Alexander Zuev, for his briefing, and Ms. Nathalie Ochoa Niño of the United Nations Mine Action Service in Colombia. I would like to congratulate her for the work she is doing and for her very eloquent briefing.

Uruguay, commensurate with its long-standing pacifist philosophy, is a country deeply committed to the disarmament and non-proliferation regime and advocates for strengthening multilateralism as part of its efforts to promote universal and complete disarmament. In line with the this, Uruguay has signed and ratified the relevant existing regional and international treaties for such purposes.

We all know that anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war are responsible for countless victims in various conflicts, many of which continue to rage. Every year, these weapons kill or injure thousands of people, without making a distinction between civilians and combatants, and imperil the lives of those living in the affected areas and limit the local populations' access to basic services. A large number of civilians die or suffer injuries from these weapons, even long after the end of armed conflict. Of particular note is the risk of unexploded remnants of war explosives to children, who are the most vulnerable victims in conflict situations.

In the light of the foregoing, it is essential that we strengthen the regulatory framework prohibiting the use of anti-personnel mines and spare no effort to universalize the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. In that regard, Uruguay would urge States that have not signed the Convention to accede to it as soon as possible, in

particular those States that currently manufacture and sell such weapons. Similarly, Uruguay encourages all Member States to comply fully with their international obligations and uphold their existing commitments under international law pertaining to disarmament and non-proliferation.

The regulation of the arms trade and the implementation of existing instruments are crucial if we are to avoid the consequences suffered by civilian victims of armed violence and if we are to promote international peace and security. As the Secretary-General points out in his most recent report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/2017/414), commitment to conflict prevention compels us to address the illicit and irresponsible transfer of weapons as such transfers make armed conflict possible and jeopardize efforts to protect and build peace. For that reason, the ratification of, and accession to, international instruments intended to protect civilians, such as the historic Arms Trade Treaty, will make a major contribution to protecting civilians from harm.

With regard to mine action within peacekeeping operations, Uruguay wishes to acknowledge the assistance provided by the United Nations in affected areas. We also wish to convey our gratitude and appreciation to the agents and institutions that work to clear out landmines and remnants of war explosives and to mitigate the impact of these arms on people's lives.

Finally, we would like to emphasize that, if we are to end the suffering of thousands of people caused by these weapons, we must secure the commitment and determination of the entire international community to eliminate them, because the use of anti-personnel mines by any actor is unacceptable.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Bolivian presidency of the Security Council for convening today's important debate and for its resolution on mine action, in which France is actively participating. I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Zuev and Ms. Nathalie Ochoa Niño for their very illuminating briefings.

The threats posed by anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war, as well as the ongoing use of cluster munitions, are a serious and major concern in today's world. That is further compounded by numerous challenges posed by the growing use of improvised explosive devices with an ever-increasing death toll. Recent news of incidents in Mali, where we have all already been hard hit, has been particularly notable. But this worrisome observation applies in fact wherever civilians, local forces and troop-contributing countries are confronting this scourge of modern conflict on a daily basis. These weapons can kill and maim right away or at a later date, randomly striking long after they have been laid. They make no distinction between civilians and troops.

Given this extremely acute threat, we have moral and legal obligations — not just an obligation related to security concerns — with respect to the populations we must protect, the personnel we deploy, and the host States with which we collaborate. I am also thinking of the first teams on the ground — the civil and military mine-clearance experts. I would like to pay tribute to them for their ongoing and unstinting commitment as they risk their lives. What they do is key because it saves lives every day, not only by protecting civilians from these weapons, but also by creating the security conditions for Blue Helmets to be deployed and humanitarian personnel to reach populations in need.

Anti-personnel mines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices form a complex whole. The presence of mines in residential and cultural areas, the spread of unexploded ordnance, and entrapment by improvised explosive devices are particular challenges. To address them, we must garner specific expertise and resources. As in many other fields, there can be no one single response, but rather a series of tailored, distinct but complementary measures whose consistency must be maintained and strengthened.

We should first provide actors on the ground, be they troops or deployed forces, with the operational means necessary for their action. Specialized non-governmental organizations should also be supported, as they work tirelessly in extremely dangerous areas. New technologies must play a role in foreseeing and mitigating threats. Accordingly, I would like to commend all of the Secretariat's innovative initiatives in this area. I would also like to pay tribute to the outstanding work of the United Nations Mine Action Service, under the particularly effective and dynamic leadership of Agnès Marcaillou, together with other United Nations bodies.

We also have a major responsibility in terms of assistance, particularly in the areas of training and awareness-raising. It is indeed important to let susceptible countries to build their own know-how,

so that they do not have to depend on that of others. That also means stepping up our education efforts to improve local populations' understanding of risks. Such prevention efforts are an essential part of our work and should be part of the clearing and security programmes undertaken to protect the civilian populations.

In that context, France's efforts focus in particular on supporting the security sector reform in various partner States. We support the training of national bodies and provide assistance to non-governmental organizations deployed in relevant countries. Like Handicap International, these non-governmental organizations are doing an admirable job. In order to ensure stability, France, working in an essentially humanitarian framework, supports specialized training in a number of post-crisis countries. We also support demining programmes, particularly in the Middle East and Africa, in close cooperation with our partners. For example, we support such regional initiatives as the Development Centre for Post-Conflict Operations in Mine Clearance and Decontamination in Benin.

However, operational activities cannot simply be the sum of individual efforts. The complexity of the threat requires multiple stakeholders engaging in a coordinated response, based on the diversity of expertise and respective means. The Mine Action Support Group, currently chaired by Italy, is an excellent example of this. France also works closely with the European Union and the main non-governmental organizations involved.

Bolstering our resources on the ground will finally be coupled with the need to ensure the universalization and the full implementation of the legal tools at our disposal. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction comes to mind as a reference instrument for combating anti-personnel mines, as does the Convention on Cluster Munitions, signed in Oslo, which bans cluster munitions. Many countries today share the same objectives as those conventions, even if they are not yet signatories. And some are considering becoming signatories, which we must encourage and facilitate.

In the face of ever-increasing casualties due to such weapons, time is short. We are duty-bound morally, politically and legally to intensify our efforts and strengthen their coherence so as to minimize the bloodshed caused by those deadly devices. I pledge France's full support.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): I would like to thank Mr. Zuev and Ms. Ochoa Niño for their vivid briefings. I want to thank you in particular, Mr. President, for bringing this issue before the whole of the Security Council. It is an issue that we seldom discuss, but one that has an impact on conflict after conflict ever since the United Nations came into existence. Sadly, that impact is still being felt in too many places today.

To simply treat this issue as any other on our agenda would be a mistake. Anti-personnel landmines are nothing short of indiscriminate killers. They do not recognize sides in conflict; they recognize no age or affiliation.

I am proud to represent a country that wants to see an anti-personnel-mine-free world. In 1995 our predecessors sat around this table and unanimously adopted resolution 1005 (1995), which recognized the global threat posed by those devices. At the time we focused on Rwanda and a select group of countries. Two years later, Princess Diana walked the streets of Cuito, Angola, greeting children affected by the scourge of landmines. She spoke with the survivors and saw the human face of an epidemic, a man-made epidemic, that took the form of a 100 million mines scattered throughout more than 70 countries. Twenty years ago, landmines claimed a new victim every 20 minutes.

That was the state to play two decades ago. In the face of what seemed to be insurmountable odds, we collectively said then that this must end. Later that year, we came together as Governments, civil society and survivors from around the world to channel momentum and agree to a treaty banning antipersonnel mines.

Twenty years later, we have undoubtedly come a long way, but 2015 showed what is at stake if we take our foot off the accelerator. That year saw a 75 per cent increase in casualties compared to 2014, and it was the most deadly year on record since 2006. That marked increased was largely due to the increase in the use of improvised anti-personnel mines by non-State armed groups in the Middle East. What is worse is that of the 6,461 people killed or injured that year, more than one in three was a child.

The thousands who lost life and limb do not tell the full story. Millions more are forced to live alongside land littered with anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war. By virtue of their very existence, livelihoods are put at risk. They prevent children from attending school; they prevent

farmers from growing crops to feed their communities; they prevent humanitarian aid from reaching those in need; and they make the journey home impossible for refugees.

It is for all those reasons that the United Kingdom announced in April that we would be increasing our support for anti-mine action. We announced more than $125 million for the United Kingdom Global Mine Action Programme over the next three years. Those funds build on the existing $38 million that our Department for International Development has already pledged. They will be used to clear 150 square kilometres of lands of mines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war

Because of those projects, 800,000 people will no longer live under the threat of landmines, and 100,000 people will receive education on the dangers they pose. The United Kingdom is also making significant progress towards meeting its obligations under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction in order to demine the Falkland Islands after we announced a new $25 million programme phase in September last year, which we are implementing now.

We are focusing our efforts on the countries where we can make the biggest impact, where the greatest number of people live in the shadow of explosive remnants of war. By the end of the three years, Afghanistan, Somalia and South Sudan, will be among the countries that have benefited from this United Kingdom-sponsored project.

Sadly, this will not be enough. Sixty countries and four territories are still contaminated with landmines. Nearly a dozen of those have more than 100 square kilometres that have been forfeited to mines. Landmines are still destroying opportunity and hope. If we are to restore that hope, we must come together again as we did 20 years ago. Ending mines will require money, education and survivor assistance. We call on each and every Government that will speak in the Chamber today to play that part.

As conflicts subside today, the explosive remnants of war do not. Landmines respect no ceasefire; they respect no peace agreement. In any given week, the Council discusses the need to end violence, conflict and war in some part of the world. If we do not tackle the global scourge of landmines, we are putting those who have emerge from conflicts even further behind.

Twenty years ago, we showed the collective action was possible. Now it is time to finish the job.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Against the backdrop of the proliferation of asymmetric conflicts, Senegal commends the Bolivian presidency for holding a briefing on a topic that is so important to international peace and security — demining.

I would like to thank our briefers today, Mr. Alexander Zuev, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and Ms. Nathalie Ochoa Niño, of the United Nations Mine Action Service in Colombia, for their instructive briefings.

Ms. Ochoa Niño explained why humanitarian demining was a precondition for peace, reconciliation and development and a real turning point for the Colombian Final Peace Agreement, which her country signed.

Since the adoption, 20 years ago, of the the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, otherwise known as the Ottawa Convention, significant efforts have been made to combat anti-personnel mines — as evidenced by the accession of 162 Member States to that Convention. Senegal is one such State. Despite the mobilization of the international community, those explosive devices continue to be a genuine threat to international peace and security, in particular in a context of a growing number of non-State actors, such as terrorist groups.

Even more concerning, as mines get cheaper because they are easy to produce, their removal becomes exponentially more expensive — with a devastating impact on the socioeconomic development of contaminated areas. Since Senegal incorporated the Ottawa Convention into its domestic laws and implemented relevant institutional mechanisms, it subsequently destroyed its stockpile of anti-personnel mines between 2000 and 2004. Since then, my country has continued to ask countries that produce such weapons to demonstrate greater political will in limiting their manufacture in line with the goal of the total destruction of such weapons and explosives. With the support of its bilateral and multilateral partners, a humanitarian demining programme has been

launched in southern Senegal with a view to removing landmines from the entire area in order to ensure the effective return of the population to the area and the resumption of economic activities in a region with vast economic potential.

From 2008 to date, thanks to the Senegalese National Mine Action Centre, an area of more than 1.8 million square metres spanning four communities has been completely demined. Similarly, Senegal focuses all the required attention on other important aspects of humanitarian demining that are elements of mine action, including risk-reduction education, advocacy, assistance to victims and the destruction of stockpiled mines. With regard to the astronomical costs of demining efforts, the Government of Senegal has decided to earmark a portion of its budget every year to that important endeavour. It will not be sufficient, however, and that is why we require the support of our partners in order to remove all anti-personnel mines by 2021.

Since its entry into force in August 2010 with 101 States parties and 18 State signatories, the Convention on Cluster Munitions has enjoyed the growing support of the international community, which has fully taken note of its legal and moral accountability in attaining a world free of cluster munitions. It should be recalled that those weapons have reprehensible traumatic and psychological effects on civilian populations. We are pleased to state that, in the same spirit that inspired the parties to the Ottawa Convention, African countries, including my own, play a key role in the implementation of this international legal instrument. In that regard, Senegal, which does not possess such weapons and is committed to honouring its obligations, along with its international partners, will continue to raise awareness among other States in order to make the Convention on Cluster Munitions universal, as it is essential to international peace and security, and in particular the protection and dignity of civilians.

As a major contributor of troops to United Nations peacekeeping operations, Senegal commends the attention paid to the threats posed by landmines, the explosive remnants of war, improvised explosive devices and cluster munitions in the context of discharging mission mandates. Similarly, my country commends the fact that this dimension is under consideration by the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. The use of such weapons, in particular by non-State actors, such as terrorist groups, in a volatile and unpredictable environment similar to that in which the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali operates, is an additional challenge to peace soldiers.

We take this opportunity to commend the tireless efforts of the United Nations, and in particular of the United Nations Mine Action Service, through cooperation, capacity-building and technical assistance to achieve a world free of such explosive devices, which are responsible for the indiscriminate killing of children and adults, civilians and military personnel.

In conclusion, my delegation reaffirms its readiness to work with the other members of the Security Council to make a positive contribution to the relevant draft resolution that your country, Sir, has submitted for its consideration.

Mr. Kawamura (Japan): At the outset, I would like to express my deepest sympathies to all the innocent civilians who have been killed or maimed by explosive hazards. I would also like to applaud all those working towards demining, including today's excellent briefers, for their courage and professionalism.

Twenty years ago, in 1997, the momentous Ottawa Convention was opened for signature. Since then, we have seen significant advancements, including the steady destruction of stockpiles and progressive decreases of minefields in most of the affected countries. However, as we face global crises, such as the rise in violent extremism and terrorism, the threat of explosive hazards is far from declining. According to Landmine Monitor, the number of landmine victims jumped from 3,700 in 2014 to 6,500 in 2015, and the United Nations is calling for a 50 per cent increase in funding for mine action from $347 million in 2016 to $511 million in 2017. The needs are greatest in active conflict zones, such as those in the Middle East and it must be our shared concern. The fundamental challenge here is how to implement concrete actions in conflict situations.

Humanitarian actions cannot be undertaken without mine action, nor can displaced people return to their homes. Mine action is therefore a prerequisite for peace and security. In parallel with the peacekeeping operations of the United Nations, strengthening the national capacities of affected countries should be our primary target. In addition to demining, providing victim assistance and risk-reduction education to affected communities is critical to making peace and stability sustainable. Based on those ideas, Japan

keeps contributing to the Voluntary Trust Fund of the United Nations Mine Action Service. We believe that it improves the humanitarian situation around the world, especially in the Middle East region, including Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, and enhances the resilience of local communities.

Japan has long made assistance to mine action one of its priorities, and we are proud to be the second-largest contributing country, with total cumulative contributions from 2011 to 2015 amounting to $263 million. I should like to take this opportunity to share several lessons learned from our own experiences, which might be useful in terms of mine action.

First, we recognize that triangular cooperation deserves to be promoted. Assistance to Cambodia has been our longest commitment in that field. Based on the knowledge and experience yielded from such cooperation, Japan and Cambodia are now expanding triangular technical cooperation with Colombia, Angola and Laos through the Cambodian Mine Action Centre.

Secondly, a wide range of partnerships is of great importance. Japanese private companies and civil society organizations are involved in collective efforts. For example, a high-tech clearance machine, produced by a Japanese company, is capable of crushing cluster munitions with its specialized bucket, and that company lends machines to a non-governmental organization for its activities in Laos.

Thirdly, gender mainstreaming should be highlighted. There is no question that women's participation enhances the quality of those activities. That is particularly true when it comes to approaches to women, children and victim assistance strategies. Ms. Nathalie Ochoa Niño's accomplishments are a perfect testimony to it.

In 2014, we set a political goal to realize a landmine-free world by 2025 under the framework of the Ottawa Treaty. To achieve this goal, the international community still has a lot to do. Japan will continue to play an active role in mine action in collaboration with the United Nations, Member States, private companies and civil society organizations.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Zuev and Ms. Ochoa Niño for their very informative briefings today. We, too, would like to extend our appreciation to those brave individuals and organizations that put their lives on the line to mitigate landmines, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and unexploded ordnance in conflict-ridden areas. We hope that today's discussion will help us continue to highlight the importance of humanitarian mine action, countering the threat of improvised explosive devices and mitigating the danger of explosive remnants of war.

The United States has been the world's single largest financial supporter of such efforts. We have provided more than $2.8 billion in such aid since 1993 in more than 99 countries for conventional weapons destruction, which includes the clearance of my landmines and unexploded ordnance, including in Colombia where we are the largest donor in the sector. We urge other Member States to join us in a robust international partnership to reduce the humanitarian impact of landmines, unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices on vulnerable communities around the world.

Today public and private sector organizations are playing a vital role in clearing IEDs and other explosive devices often before conflict and violence have completely ceased. These partners will continue to provide essential support to ease the safe return of civilians in areas where fighting has taken place.

Nowhere are these challenges more prevalent than in our ongoing efforts to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham (ISIS). Many of the areas that have been liberated or are in the process of being liberated from ISIS are severely contaminated with landmines and IEDs. Some of these explosive devices operate as booby traps meant to spread terror even after ISIS fighters have departed. An important part of defeating ISIS involves clearing these landmines, IEDs and unexploded ordnance so internally displaced persons and refugees can return to their homes. This also involves ensuring key infrastructure points are free of landmines and IEDs so that water service can be restored and sanitation services resumed.

However, there remains the potential for confusion about the role of humanitarian mine action implementers and military and security personnel who are operating in evolving conflict areas to mitigate IEDs. In order to best protect mine action personnel, it is important that Member States not conflate IED clearance with military counter-IED activities. Affected States, donors, the United Nations and humanitarian mine action implementers should work together to make sure

that all personnel searching for and disposing of IEDs have the appropriate skills to do the job. The aim should be to ensure the safe, effective and efficient disposal of IEDs.

The United States will continue to support the efforts of the United Nations and others to mitigate the humanitarian consequences of landmines, unexploded ordnance and IEDs.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China wishes to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting. We thank Assistant Secretary-General Zuev and Ms. Ochoa Niño for their briefings.

In recent years, thanks to the joint efforts of the international community, progress has been made in the area of international mine action. The harrowing problem of landmines has been mitigated in some countries and regions. China appreciates the efforts undertaken by the United Nations in this area.

At present, the international and regional security situation is undergoing complex and profound changes. In many countries and regions affected by war or armed conflict, landmines and explosive remnants of war pose a serious threat to civilian lives and property and impede economic development and social reconstruction. In recent years, improvised explosive devices have become a means for terrorists and extremists to carry out their acts of terrorism and violence.

Strengthening international assistance and cooperation in mine action and effectively reducing the threat of landmines and other explosives to civilians and peacekeepers is an important task. China believes that to effectively address the humanitarian concern arising from landmines and other explosives, the international community should observe the following principles.

First, we must adhere to the principle of ownership by Member States. It is imperative to fully take into account the national conditions and needs of the landmine-affected countries and continuously improve the capacity and level of the affected countries participating in demining in order to fully leverage their role.

Secondly, we must uphold the principle of balanced treatment. It is important to respect the differences among countries in terms of security environments and military strength by both properly addressing the humanitarian concerns and fully taking into account the legitimate national military and security needs.

Thirdly, we must uphold the principle of results-orientation. It is important to focus on improving the practical results of demining assistance and cooperation, improving the capacity-building of recipient States and promoting a transition from their reliance on external assistance to self-reliance as to the mainstay.

China has always paid great attention to the humanitarian concerns associated with landmines and actively supported international legal instruments, including the Geneva Convention and the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW). China is a full member of CCW and its five additional protocols. We faithfully fulfil our obligations under those instruments.

For many years, China has maintained close exchanges and cooperation with the contracting parties of Ottawa Convention on Landmines and has participated as an observer in the Meetings of States parties and its review conferences. It also participated in the actual Conference of the Convention. China is actively committed to the international humanitarian demining assistance cause and has, to the best of its ability, provided assistance to the affected countries and victims. Since 1998, the Chinese Government has provided assistance in the forms of demining equipment and technology training, as well as donations. It has also provided humanitarian assistance worth more than ¥90 million to nearly 40 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. It has trained nearly 500 professional demining technicians.

In September 2015, Chinese President Mr. Xi Jinping announced at the Leaders' Summit on Peacekeeping, during the seventieth session of the General Assembly, that China would in the next five years launch 10 demining assistance programmes. At present China, is actively honouring this commitment and implementing the related programmes.

China attaches great importance to the humanitarian concerns arising from the abuse of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) by non-State actors. We support the discussion of IEDs within the framework of the amended landmine protocol to CCW. We are ready for a useful exchange of views with the parties concerned. Chinese experts and the United Nations, among others, jointly formulated the United Nations

IED disposal standards and co-hosted the first Meeting of the Group off Experts last March in Beijing.

China fully understands the aspirations of landmine-affected countries and peoples for security and development. We are ready to fulfil our international obligations, as always, and provide assistance to the best of our ability. We are ready to join the international community in addressing the humanitarian concerns arising from landmines and other explosive devices.

Mr. Ilichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We appreciate Assistant Secretary-General Alexander Zuev's first but nonetheless substantive and multilingual briefing, and listened attentively to the statement by Ms. Nathalie Ochoa Niño, United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) staffer in Colombia.

With the increasing numbers of hotbeds of tension and local conflicts, it is not just the problem of finding political settlements for them that is becoming particularly acute, but also the importance of intensifying the international community's efforts to deal with their most immediate consequences, such as unexploded mines, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war. This is a global issue, one of the most significant obstacles not only to returning refugees and temporarily displaced persons to their homes but also to restoring the overall infrastructure and economy of post-conflict regions. It also represents a serious threat to United Nations peacekeeping forces, which just since 2014 have lost 21 personnel killed and 105 injured as a result of incidents involving explosive objects. In that regard, we fully share the opinion of Secretary-General Guterres that peace without mine action is an inferior peace.

The Russian Federation considers coordinating role of UNMAS in the United Nations system very important. We intend to continue supporting its efforts to develop standards, best practices and recommendations for mine action and are ready to participate in the third expert meeting on the development of standards for the disposal of improvised explosive devices. Just as important as the theoretical efforts of UNMAS is its applied work, which is done within the framework of existing United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions. We also attach importance to the help it provides to requesting States, on a voluntary basis, in order to achieve qualitative improvements in their national demining capacities. It is ultimately Governments that have to bear the primary responsibility for ensuring their peoples' safety, including from terrorist attacks. In 2014, under the auspices of its Ministry of Defence, the Russian Federation created an international mine action centre as its national contribution to international mine action. Its work is guided by international United Nations standards as well as national ones, on the basis ofwhich it trains specialists in humanitarian mine clearance.

I would also like to draw attention to the urgent need for the international community to step up demining efforts in Syria, representing a pledge to return refugees and temporarily displaced persons to their homes as quickly as possible. The Russian Federation recently initiated efforts to form a broad international coalition for mine action in Syria, and Russian servicemen are already working actively on demining the country's territory. We hope that our partners will be able to contribute to the best of their ability to solving this humanitarian problem.

The Russian Federation is ready to work productively on the draft resolution proposed by the Bolivian delegation, which we believe has the potential to provide UNMAS with practical help in fulfilling its mandate.

Mr. Skau (Sweden): I would like to begin by thanking Bolivia for putting mine action on the Council's agenda today. I would also like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Alexander Zuev for his useful briefing and, especially, Ms. Nathalie Ochoa Niño for her passionate and inspiring statement this morning.

The terrible legacy of landmines and explosive remnants of war in the communities where they are found cannot be overstated. Families returning from the displacement caused by conflict find that the land that once sustained them has now turned against them. The presence of landmines undermines returnees' ability to grow and harvest crops for food or sale, undermining health and livelihoods, and holds an even worse threat, that of death or injury.

In the 20 years since the Ottawa Convention was drawn up, impressive progress has been made in the fight to end the use of landmines. It is a positive development that casualties from landmines have fallen in the past few years, in a reflection of the almost total elimination of the use of anti-personnel mines, thanks to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, as well as progress in efforts to make previously mined areas safe for use. However, that work is far from finished.

The number of casualties of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) has risen sharply, a development that is largely attributable to the use of IEDs in conflict and post-conflict areas, particularly by non-State actors. Every effort must be made to mitigate the threat that IEDs pose to individuals and communities. We welcome the ongoing work within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Amended Protocol II that is designed to enable us to share experiences regarding the humanitarian problems posed by IEDs and to learn about national, regional and international efforts to prevent their use.

Sweden fully shares the concerns that have been expressed about the serious humanitarian problems caused by landmines and explosive remnants of war in post-conflict areas. We must step up our efforts to minimize the occurrence, effects and risks of this threat. Children are particularly vulnerable. The landmark Graça Machel report (A/51/306), which led ultimately to the United Nations mandate on children in armed conflict, noted that landmines represent an insidious and persistent danger to children. Children, who are naturally curious, are likely to pick up strange objects and, deplorably, some landmines have even been designed to be toy-like. Children are also far more likely than adults to die from mine injuries. Their needs should therefore always be at the forefront when mine-awareness and physical-rehabilitation programmes are being designed.

The task of clearing the explosive remnants of war is often dangerous and painfully slow, but the effects of humanitarian mine clearance on communities can be transformative, as we heard this morning from Ms. Ochoa Niño. It is therefore important to ensure that support for mine action, including through funding and expertise, is maintained. Sweden has contributed more than $100 million to mine action worldwide over the past decade. In addition to financing, technical assistance is also an important aspect of mine action. Sweden's Civil Contingencies Agency is a partner of UNMAS and the International Committee of the Red Cross and conducts humanitarian mine action worldwide. Through UNMAS, for example, we recently supported mine-action activities in Somalia aimed at minimizing the impact of explosive hazards, building national explosive management capacity and enabling the African Union Mission in Somalia to fulfil its mandate with greater safety and freedom of movement.

More broadly, Sweden believes in an approach to disarmament and international security that puts human beings at the centre of our policy. Sweden is a State party to all conventions relevant to the banning or regulation of the use of non-controllable mines, anti-personnel landmines, cluster munitions and the handling of explosive remnants of war. We believe that continuing to work to universalize those conventions is the most effective way to counter the risks associated with the use of such weapons.

In conclusion, a commitment to international frameworks, as well as well-resourced and effective mine-action programmes, will not only save lives but will also enable those who have survived the ravages of war to begin rebuilding their lives.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I would like to express my appreciation to the Bolivian delegation and to you personally, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting and raising such an important topic in the Security Council. I also thank Mr. Zuev and Ms. Ochoa Niño for their informative briefings.

Ongoing conflicts and military activities in States affected by instability are resulting in the contamination of new territories by explosive remnants of war. Improvised explosive devices are increasingly being used by illegal armed and terrorist groups and pose a significant threat to communities recovering from conflict. That is why mine action remains essential in enabling an effective humanitarian response, the protection of civilians and freedom of movement for communities, humanitarian personnel and peacekeepers.

Ukraine attaches great importance to these issues and in recent years co-sponsored General Assembly resolutions on assistance in mine action and on countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices. We also supported the General Assembly resolutions on the Ottawa Convention and on the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

As a State party to these two Conventions, Ukraine acknowledges their fundamental character in minimizing the risks stemming from landmines and explosive remnants of war.

Despite the current significant challenges in the security field caused by the hybrid war waged against Ukraine, we are fully complying with our obligations under these treaties. Indeed, since 2014, the issue of

mine action and explosive hazard threat mitigation has acquired a whole new meaning for my country. The explosive hazard threat is a direct result of the foreign armed aggression and offensive actions carried out by the hybrid Russian-terrorist forces operating in some areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine.

Mines and explosive devices are scattered throughout the conflict area, especially along the contact line, and pose a severe threat to civilians, including children. During the period from 16 February to 15 May, 36 civilians died and 157 were wounded in Donbas. This represents a 70 per cent increase over the same period of the previous year. In 40 per cent of cases, people died as a result of mines and unexploded ordnance.

Such explosive remnants of war are often planted by illegal armed groups in residential areas and along communication routes, thus posing a greater threat to the civilian population than to military personnel. Recently a member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine fell victim to one of these devices when a patrol car carrying OSCE personnel was blown up on 23 April near the city of Luhansk.

Unfortunately, the Security Council statement condemning this horrible incident was blocked by the Russian delegation, which is very telling with respect to the perpetrators of this crime and their Kremlin patrons.

It is in these extremely difficult circumstances that Ukraine is taking all possible measures to destroy and dispose of explosive remnants of war on its territory. The State emergency service of Ukraine and other national authorities, in close cooperation with the United Nations Mine Action Service, UNICEF, the OSCE, NATO and other international partners, are actively engaged in performing a range of demining actions on the liberated territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, including providing mine-risk education for Ukrainian citizens in conflict-affected areas. However, humanitarian demining will be possible only after the end of hostilities. So far, even repair of the critical infrastructure damaged by persistent shelling by Russian guns remains a major challenge.

In conclusion, I would like to underline the importance of international cooperation in addressing the threats posed by explosive remnants of war, improvised explosive devices and landmines, as well as in the implementation of the respective international instruments. We hope that the adoption of the draft resolution submitted by Bolivia will bring closer a total ban on the use of one of the most inhuman weapons of war ever created.

Mr. Sadykov (Kazakhstan): We thank the Bolivian presidency for having brought the hazards of mines and explosives to the attention of the Security Council. My delegation expresses its appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Mr. Alexander Zuev and Ms. Nathalie Ochoa Niño for their insightful briefings and commends their efforts to bring about stability in the world. We also value highly the work done by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in this regard and especially the successful mine action in Mali, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Iraq and Colombia.

My delegation would like to make the following observations and recommendations.

Mine action is at the core of post-conflict humanitarian response, recovery and development in all 70 States affected. Mines and explosives take a high death toll and mutilate their victims, restrict the movement of people and humanitarian aid, make land unsuitable for cultivation and deny citizens access to water, food, care and trade. Contamination by mines and explosive remnants of war affects civilian populations, United Nations operations and global peace and security.

The growing number of intra-State conflicts and the expanded range of explosive hazards have led to growing requests for United Nations emergency humanitarian mine-action assistance. Mine action enables the safe return of internally displaced persons and refugees and ensures access for humanitarian actors and peacekeepers. We urge the international community to support, through predictable, earmarked United Nations funding, the activities of UNMAS, which has proved to be an invaluable and efficient tool in mitigating the hazards of mines.

Effective mine action should include the five pillars, the first of which is to clear, remove and destroy landmines and explosive remnants of war and mark or fence off contaminated areas. Education about risks, safety and identifying mines and explosive remnants is essential. Medical assistance measures and rehabilitation services for victims, advocacy for a world free from the threat of landmines, and the need for countries to implement international treaties remain

crucial. At the same time, countries should be helped to strengthen their national capacities to deal with the threat posed by mines and explosives.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs can share good practices and develop guidance on mitigating the threat of explosive weapons in populated areas. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction has, since its entry into force, played an important role in addressing humanitarian issues related to the use of such weapons. We fully share and support the humanitarian objectives of the Convention.

Based on the importance of the humanitarian aspects of this issue, from 2003 to 2009 Kazakhstan's engineer sapper unit in Iraq neutralized more than 4.5 million explosive devices and provided specialized training to the Iraqi security forces. In the process of furthering our national capacities in countering the threat posed by mines and explosives, my country has established and developed a demining centre.

Kazakhstan is committed to joining the multilateral effort to ensure the safety and security of civilians and to sustain peace and reinforce stabilization.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to begin by expressing my full appreciation to Bolivia for having organized this briefing, which is aimed at underscoring this very important issue.

Landmines and explosive remnants of war pose a serious threat to the life and safety of civilians in many countries throughout the world. The hazards posed by such explosives indiscriminately threaten not only civilians but also those working in national law-enforcement institutions, in addition to peacekeepers and humanitarian relief workers, including deminers.

In addition, such explosives have grave long-term humanitarian, social and development consequences. They pose an obstacle to the delivery of humanitarian assistance to civilians in need and to the development of affected areas. This limits the chances of development and of improving the socioeconomic conditions of the people living in such areas. They also constitute a heavy burden on peacebuilding in countries emerging from conflicts, which can last for decades after the conflicts end. Neglected mines and explosive remnants of wars are sources to obtain the materials required to manufacture improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Those IEDs are used by armed groups and terrorists in many attacks that have claimed the lives of thousands across different countries and regions of the world.

Egypt is one of the countries that is most affected by mines and their impacts. More than 22.7 million mines and explosive devices were laid in Egyptian territories during the Second World War. That is 20 per cent more than the total number of laid mines in the world. More than 17 million of those mines exist in the area of El Alamein. Identifying the locations of such a huge number of mines and clearing them require significant financial resources. Therefore, they are a great impediment of development, not to mention the humanitarian threat that has led to thousands of casualties over the years.

Given all this, Egypt has paid special attention to addressing the issue. Egypt established the National Demining Committee to oversee demining activities and the development of affected areas. The Committee has drafted a national mine strategy to address mine issues in collaboration with various relevant ministries and governmental bodies, as well as with civil society organizations. A trust fund has also been established, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, to assist in implementing that strategy. Egypt has also implemented a moratorium on the transfer of mines to any other country in 1984. Egypt also stopped the production of mines in 1988, even before any international conventions on the matter existed. Egypt has stressed the importance of striking a balance between humanitarian considerations and considerations related to the legitimate use of mines for self-defence, as well as their use as a regulated and controlled way to secure borders.

Egypt stresses the important role played by the United Nations, through the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action to provide assistance in the field of mine action. Egypt also welcomes the incorporation of mine action into the mandates of peacekeeping and special political missions authorized by the Security Council in conflict areas. Egypt also stresses the importance of drafting a comprehensive approach to mine action. That approach should mobilize efforts within the international community to support national efforts in countries affected by mines and provide assistance to build capacities to deal with mines and hazardous explosives. Egypt also stresses that any legal framework or instrument should respond in particular to the legitimate concerns of the States most affected by

mines and explosive hazards. The States that laid mines in territories of other States should bear the legal and moral responsibility for having done so. They should share the burden of disposing of such mines.

In conclusion, Egypt hopes that today's meeting will contribute to mobilizing the international community to intensify cooperation in order to address the humanitarian-, security- and development-related consequences of mines and explosive hazards.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make an additional statement.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The statement of the representative of Ukraine, which featured simple allegations, was made with the single goal of distracting from Kyiv's lack of resolve to implement the Minsk agreements. Unfortunately, it was no surprise that he made uncorroborated allegations and siought to besmirch Russia. Ukraine blamed Russia for the tragic incident of 23 April on the contact line, when a vehicle of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine exploded. We have heard an entire corpus of similar allegations concerning similarly tragic incidents in Ukraine, which usually come in the immediate aftermath of the incident. Afterwards, when that incident leads to an impartial investigation, Ukraine falls silent. Today, we are seeing the very same thing in spite of the fact that an international investigation is already under way.

If anyone has any information or proof, they should swiftly provide it to the specially established investigative group led by the Deputy Chair of the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission. They should do that rather than get into political demagogery. We have our own data regarding the incident, but we do not speculate about it so as not to hamper the investigation.

That is why, instead of spreading uncorroborated evidence, we must deal with the actual peace process. That is especially true because the Ukrainian statement said the right thing — namely, that humanitarian demining activities can begin only after the end of the conflict. That, however, requires the swift implementation of all provisions of the Minsk agreements, first and foremost in the political field, the provision of a special status for certain areas of the Donbas and the holding of elections, as well as rebuilding the economic and banking systems and the provision of amnesty.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of Ukraine has asked to make an additional statement.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I will be very brief. He who lives in a glass house should not throw stones. It is appalling that the Russian Federation, which supplies separatists in the Donbas with all kinds of ordnance, ammunition and mines, has the nerve to lecture about mine awareness and demining.

The meeting rose at noon.